2.1.6 Visual/Aesthetics

This section describes the aesthetic and visual resource conditions of the proposed SR-74 Widening Project within the limits of the City. The section also discusses potential aesthetic impacts that could result from implementation of the proposed project. A program for avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures is also provided. This analysis is based on the Visual Impact Assessment dated September 2008.

2.1.6.1 Regulatory Setting

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) establishes that it is the policy of the state to take all action necessary to provide the people of the state "with…enjoyment of *aesthetic*, natural, scenic and historic environmental qualities." [CA Public Resources Code Section 21001(b)]

2.1.6.2 Affected Environment

Visual Environment

The proposed project is located in south Orange County, California, specifically in the City of San Juan Capistrano. The regional landscape is characterized by coastal communities, rolling hills, and canyons. The City is situated in a coastal valley (1 mi from the Pacific Ocean) at the foothills of southern Orange County, near the southern tip of the Santa Ana Mountains and south of the San Joaquin Hills.

The terrain is predominantly composed of gently to steeply rolling hills containing deep-cut canyons and gullies. The project site consists of SR-74 (to the east of I-5 between Calle Entradero and the City/County line), which traverses the City in a southwest/northeast direction. The project site is located along a canyon formed by San Juan Creek and ranges in elevation from approximately 135 to 175 ft above mean sea level (amsl). SR-74, within the project limits, passes through developed low-density residential, rural residential and rural/agricultural land uses (from southwest to northeast).

Landscape Units

A landscape unit is a portion of the regional landscape and can be thought of as an outdoor room that exhibits a distinct visual character. A landscape unit often corresponds to a place or district that is commonly known among local viewers.

Landscape Unit 1 (LU1): Developed Low-Density Residential Landscape is located within the southwestern portion of the project limits. This urban landscape is characterized by low-density residential land uses. SR-74, in LU1, includes a meandering sidewalk and an equestrian trail to the north, and a sidewalk to the south. Currently, no bike lanes are present within the project limits. Ornamental vegetation located within LU1 consists of grass and trees, with minimal shrubbery. Tree species that dominate this view include the California sycamore and London plane tree to the north and the Lemon scented gum, Evergreen elm, Eucalyptus, Sweetgum, and London plane tree to the south, with trunk diameters ranging from approximately eight to 30 inches. Although the project is located within the San Juan Creek Watershed, no water features are visible within LU1. Sources of light and glare consist of street lighting along the north and south sides of SR-74. Also, headlights from travelers are visible.

Landscape Unit 2 (LU2): Rural Residential Landscape is located within the central portion of the project limits. This rural landscape is characterized by low-density rural residential land uses. SR-74, in LU2, includes a meandering sidewalk and associated ornamental landscaping to the south. Rural residential units and sloping vacant land is located to the north of SR-74. Disturbed native and nonnative vegetation are located within the sloping vacant areas within the project limits. Tree species that dominate this view include the California pepper tree, Canary Island palm, Eucalyptus, Olive tree, Myoporum insulare, and Mexican fan palm to the north and the Eucalyptus, Sweetgum, and Evergreen elm to the south, with trunk diameters ranging from approximately six to 35 inches. Although the project is located within the San Juan Creek Watershed, no water features are visible within LU2. Sources of light and glare within LU2 consist of street lighting along the south side of SR-74 and headlights from travelers on SR-74.

Landscape Unit 3 (LU3): Rural/Agricultural Landscape is located within the northeastern portion of the project limits. This rural/agricultural landscape is characterized by low-density rural residential and agricultural land uses. SR-74, in LU3, adjoins rural residential units and sloping vacant land. Landscaping within LU3 consists of disturbed ornamental landscaping within private property and native and nonnative vegetation within sloping vacant areas. Tree species that dominate this view include the Brazilian pepper tree and California pepper tree to the north and the California pepper tree, Coast live oak, Spanish dagger, and Evergreen elm to the south, with trunk diameters ranging from approximately eight to 48 inches. Although the project is located within the San Juan Creek Watershed, no water features are

visible within LU3. Sources of light and glare within LU3 consist of headlights from travelers on SR-74. No street lighting is present along SR-74 in LU3.

Project Viewshed

A project viewshed is a subset of a landscape unit and comprises all the surface areas visible from an observer's viewpoint. The limits of a viewpoint are defined as the visual limits of the views located from the proposed project. The viewshed also includes the locations of viewers likely to be affected by visual changes brought about by project features.

The majority of views of the project limits include those from the westbound and eastbound travel lanes of SR-74 as well as limited views from hillside residential units (on the north side of SR-74) that are located within the canyon (refer to Figure 2.1.6-1: Key View Location Map). Views from the adjoining urban, rural, and agricultural development within the project limits exist. Based upon a site visit conducted on March 24, 2008, the majority of views to the project limits are from adjoining land uses to the north and south of the project limits. Existing topography, structures, and landscaping/vegetation screen views from other uses located further away from the project limits.

Existing Visual Quality

The average existing visual quality within the project limits is considered to be moderately high to high. The project limits contain moderate to high vividness, and many views that are considered memorable. Although views of existing overhead power lines are present in LU2 and LU3, intactness remains moderate to moderately high. There are limited background views and no distant views along SR-74 within the project limits due to large trees. Color varies throughout the project limits as a result of the ornamental landscaping and vegetation present in views.

Existing Viewer Sensitivity

Multiple sensitive viewers adjoin SR-74 within the project limits, the majority of which consist of the residential uses located north and south of SR-74. Additionally, many driveways utilize SR-74 through the project limits, and thus have a high sensitivity to alteration of views. The project limits have not been officially designated as a California State Scenic Highway, but SR-74 through the project site is eligible for the designation. The status of a proposed State Scenic Highway changes from eligible to officially designated when the local governing body applies to the

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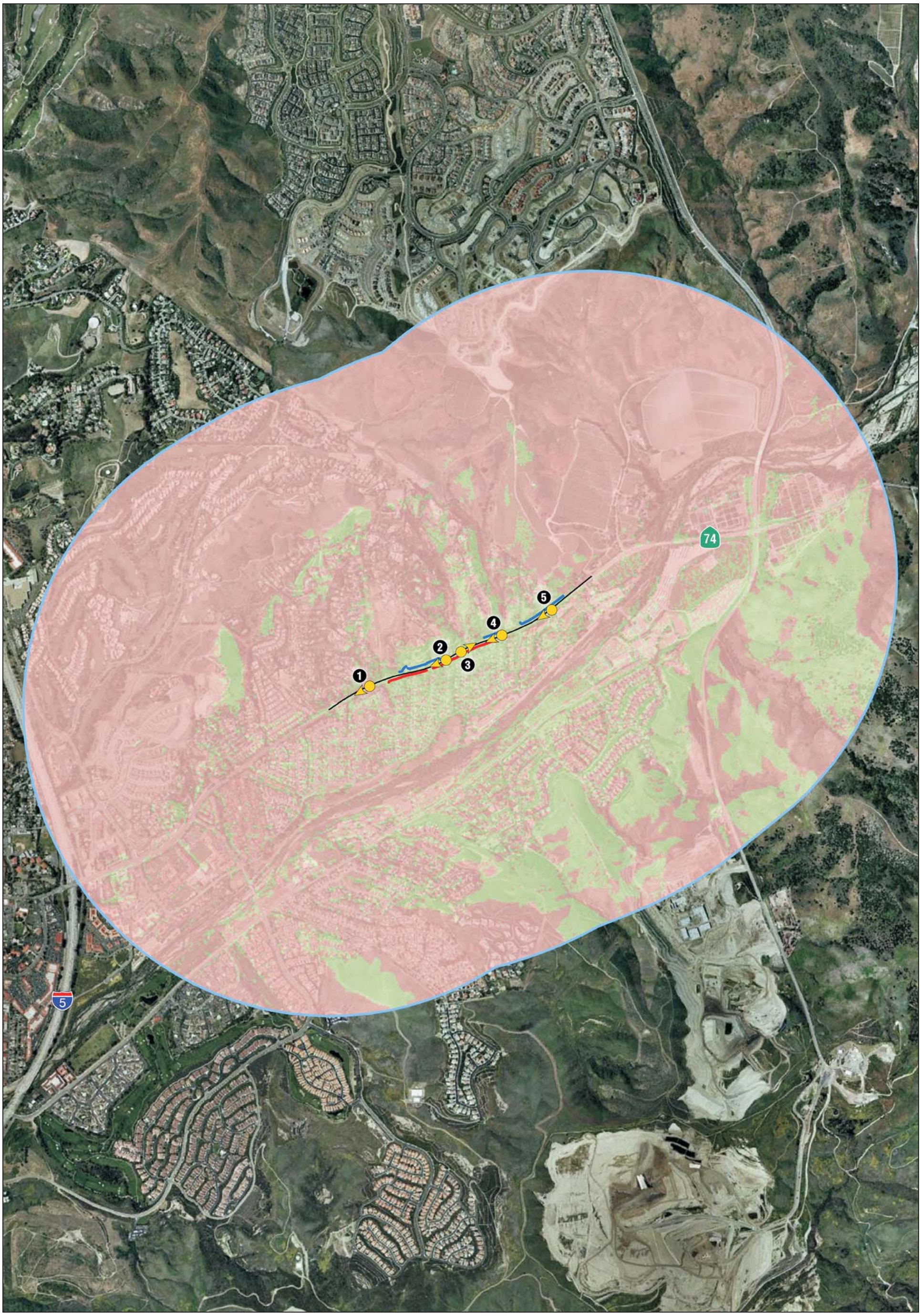

Direction of Photo
View Point Location
1 View Point Number

Project Centerline
Retaining Wall
Sound Wall
One-Mile Project Vicinity
Project Site Not Visible
Project Site Visible

0 1,500' 3,000'
APPROXIMATE

SOURCE: RBF

FIGURE 2.1.6-1

Lower SR-74 Widening Project
Key View Location Map
Alternatives 1 and 2
12-ORA-74 PM 1.0/1.9
EA No. 086920

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Department for Scenic Highway approval, adopts a Corridor Protection Program, and receives notification that the highway has been officially designated a Scenic Highway. The Department District 12 Scenic Highway Coordinator has not received any applications for Scenic Highway approval for SR-74. The County MPAH and the City designate Ortega Highway as a primary arterial highway, a four-lane divided roadway. In Table C-6 of the City's Circulation Element, the widening of the Ortega Highway is planned as a long-range roadway improvement and is to be widened to four lanes, from Calle Entradero to the east City/County limits.

2.1.6.3 Methodology

This section summarizes the methodology and terminology used to assess visual effects of the project Build Alternatives. More details on the methodology are available in the Visual Impact Assessment (September 2008). The visual impact analysis followed the methodology prescribed in the publication *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* (Federal Highway Administration [FHWA], March 1981), which is a Department approved methodology used to comply with CEQA's mandates. The following six principal steps were carried out to assess the visual effects of the proposed Lower SR-74 Build Alternatives:

1. Define the existing visual environment.
2. Identify key views for visual assessment.
3. Analyze existing visual resources (visual quality and visual character) and viewer groups.
4. Depict the visual appearance of project alternatives and viewer response.
5. Assess the visual effects of project alternatives.
6. Propose methods to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate adverse visual effects.

The visual effects of the Build Alternatives were determined by assessing the existing visual resources and the visual resource change due to the project, and predicting viewer response to that change. The degree of visual quality in a view was evaluated using the following FHWA descriptive terms:

> **Vividness:** The visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in distinctive visual patterns.
>
> **Intactness:** The visual integrity of the natural and man-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. It can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes, as well as in natural settings.

Unity: The visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. It frequently attests to the careful design of individual man-made components in the landscape.

The levels of visual impact are described as follows:

Low: Minor adverse change to the existing visual resource, with low viewer response to change in the visual environment. May or may not require mitigation.

Moderate: Moderate adverse change to the visual resource with moderate viewer response. Impact can be mitigated within five years using conventional practices.

Moderately High: Moderate adverse visual resource change with high viewer response, or high adverse visual resource change with moderate viewer response. Extraordinary mitigation practices may be required. Landscape treatment required will generally take longer than five years to mitigate.

High: A high level of adverse change to the resource or a high level of viewer response to visual change such that architectural design and landscape treatment cannot mitigate the impacts. Viewer response level is high. An alternative project design may be required to avoid highly adverse impacts.

2.1.6.4 Key Views

To evaluate the visual effects of the Build Alternatives, specific views were selected that represent the various landscape units throughout the study area, the visual resources, and a number of sensitive viewer perspectives. Selection of the views was based on the following criteria:

1. Areas that would have the most substantial changes from project implementation, such as noise barriers or retaining walls and areas with large cut-and-fill slopes
2. Areas where there are existing visual aesthetic resources, such as:
   - Existing visual resources according to the General Plans.
   - Scenic vistas.
   - Scenic roads.

3. Populated areas with consideration of residential land uses in particular
4. Representative views from each proposed Build Alternative

A key view is a photograph representation of a typical existing viewshed within the project visual study area that incorporates the best range of visual resources as seen by viewer groups. Five key views were selected that most clearly display the areas where visual effects of the proposed project are anticipated. The key views represent the primary viewer groups (commuters, pedestrians, recreational users, and residents) that would potentially be affected by the project. Key views selected for the project site and locations are shown on Figure 2.1.6-1.

Key View 1

Key View 1 is representative of LU1 and looks to the west, along the westbound travel lane of SR-74 (see Figure 2.1.6-2). Although surrounding residential units would not have direct views, the pedestrians and recreational users along the sidewalks and equestrian trail would have long-duration views of the Build Alternative features. Sensitivity to visual change would be high for those viewer groups. Also, many travelers/commuters along SR-74 would be exposed to moderate-duration views of the project. Due to the moderate number of viewers affected, the overall viewer response to change would be high.

Key View 2

Key View 2 is representative of LU2 and looks to the west along SR-74 (see Figure 2.1.6-3). Although residential units to the south would not have direct views, the pedestrians along the sidewalks to the south and the few private residents to the north would have long-duration views of the Build Alternative features. Sensitivity to visual change would be moderate for those viewer groups. Also, many travelers/commuters along SR-74 would be exposed to moderate-duration views of the project. Due to the moderate number of viewers affected, the overall viewer response to change would be moderately high.

Key View 3

Key View 3 is representative of LU2 and was taken from the eastbound travel lane of SR-74 between Via Cristal and Via Errecarte. This view looks to the east, toward the eastbound travel lane of SR-74 (see Figure 2.1.6-4). Although residential units to the south would not have direct views, the pedestrians along the sidewalks to the south and the few private residents to the north would have long-duration views of the

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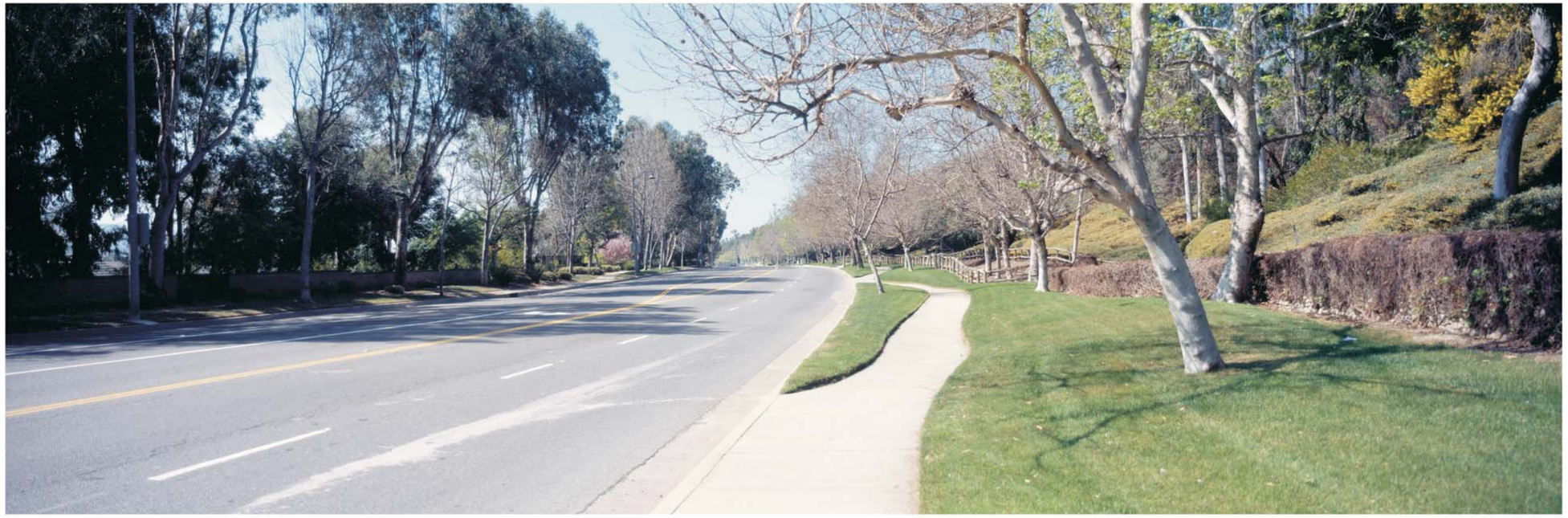

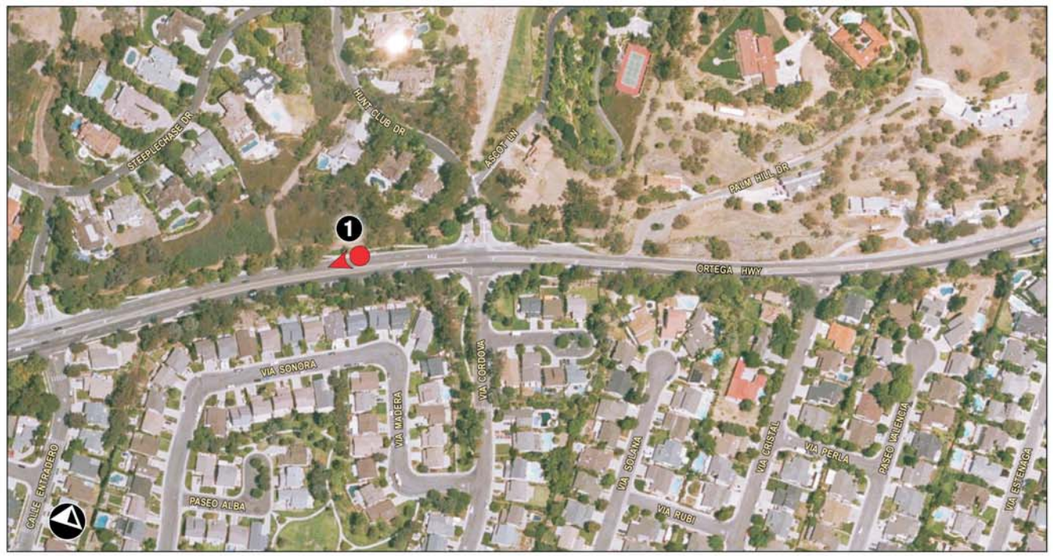

FIGURE 2.1.6-2

Lower SR-74 Widening Project

Key View 1

Existing Condition

12-ORA-74 PM 1.0/1.9

EA No. 086920

SOURCE: RBF

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FIGURE 2.1.6-3

Lower SR-74 Widening Project
Key View 2
Existing Condition
12-ORA-74 PM 1.0/1.9
EA No. 086920

SOURCE: RBF

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FIGURE 2.1.6-4

Lower SR-74 Widening Project

Key View 3
Existing Condition
12-ORA-74 PM 1.0/1.9
EA No. 086920

SOURCE: RBF

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features of Build Alternatives 1 and 2. Sensitivity to visual change would be moderate for those viewer groups. Also, many travelers/commuters along SR-74 would be exposed to moderate-duration views of the project. Due to the moderate number of viewers affected, the overall viewer response to change would be moderately high.

Key View 4

Key View 4 is representative of LU2 and was taken from the westbound travel lane of SR-74 at Via Errecarte. This view looks west along the proposed project (see Figure 2.1.6-5). Although residential units to the north and south would not have direct views, the pedestrians along the sidewalks to the south would have long-duration views of the features of Build Alternatives 1 and 2. Due to the fairly low pedestrian traffic in this portion of SR-74, viewer sensitivity to visual change would be moderately low for that viewer group. However, many travelers/commuters along SR-74 would be exposed to moderate-duration views of the project. Due to the moderate number of viewers from the road affected, the overall viewer response to change would be moderate.

Key View 5

Key View 5 is representative of LU3 and is located along westbound SR-74, between Avenida Siega and the City/County line. This view looks west along the proposed project (see Figure 2.1.6-6). Three residential units to the north and south would have long-duration views of the features of Build Alternatives 1 and 2. Due to the low number of dwelling units within this portion of SR-74, viewer sensitivity to visual change would be moderately low for that viewer group. However, many travelers/commuters along SR-74 would be exposed to moderate-duration views of the project. Due to the moderate number of viewers from the road affected, the overall viewer response to change would be moderate.

2.1.6.5 Environmental Consequences

Temporary Impacts

No Build Alternative

No changes would occur to the Lower SR-74 under the No Build Alternative. The No Build Alternative would not alter the site's visual quality or character, or have any visual impact on any visual resource or viewer group.

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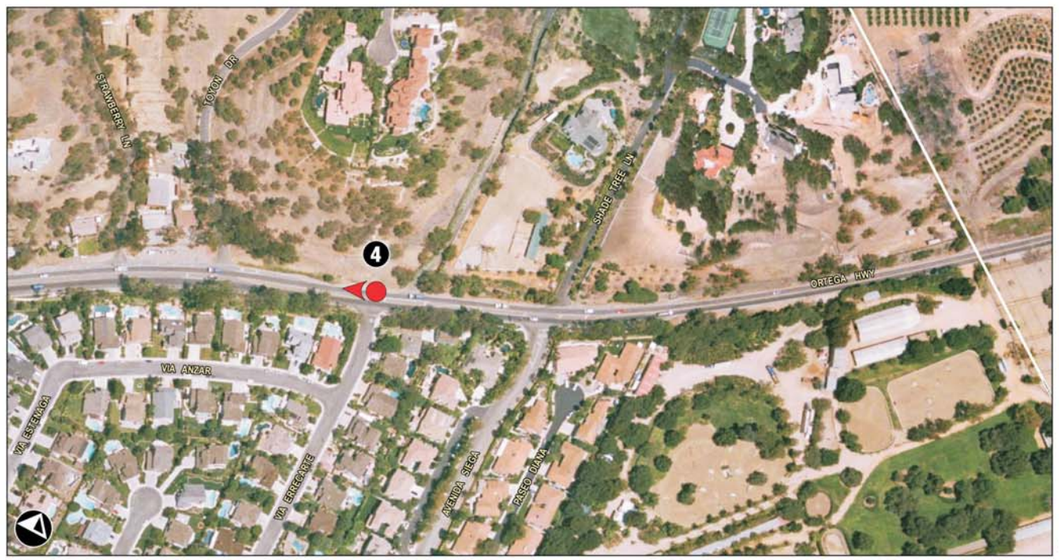

FIGURE 2.1.6-5

Lower SR-74 Widening Project
Key View 4
Existing Condition
12-ORA-74 PM 1.0/1.9
EA No. 086920

SOURCE: RBF

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FIGURE 2.1.6-6

Lower SR-74 Widening Project

Key View 5
Existing Condition

12-ORA-74 PM 1.0/1.9
EA No. 086920

SOURCE: RBF

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Build Alternatives

Temporary visual effects during construction, such as construction activity, staging sites, truck hauling, excavation activity, and construction area signage, are anticipated under both Build Alternatives. The visual effects related to construction activity are short term, and would cease after completion of construction. Any adverse effects due to vegetation clearing would gradually cease over time as replacement vegetation matures. Construction-related visual impacts would be minimized by implementing Department Standard Specifications for Construction. Temporary visual impacts are considered less than significant.

Permanent Impacts

No Build Alternative

No permanent impacts would occur to visual quality or character, visual resources, or viewer groups under the No Build Alternative.

Build Alternatives

Implementation of Build Alternatives 1 and 2 would widen SR-74 to four lanes and would generally introduce curb and gutter, retaining wall structures, noise barriers, new sidewalk, and ornamental landscaping throughout the project limits. All proposed noise barriers are anticipated to range from 747 to 1,228 ft in length. The height of noise barrier No. 2 (NB No. 2) would be a maximum of 16 ft in height and NB No. 3 would be a maximum of 14 ft. from station number (STA) 27+06 to STA 28+43 and 16 ft. from STA 28+43 to STA 30+76.5.[1] The proposed retaining walls would range in height from 2 to 24 ft and would range in length from 100 to 960 ft.

Key View 1

Implementation of project features in Key View 1 would result in a moderate to moderately high change to character/quality and a high viewer response to that change for both Alternatives 1 and 2. Both Build Alternatives would include removal of the existing sidewalk and ornamental landscaping and replacement with proposed roadway, curb and gutter, and ornamental landscaping (see Figure 2.1.6-7). Both Alternatives would remove mature trees and the existing meandering sidewalk, which currently contributes to a rural landscape within this suburban setting. Although implementation of Alternative 2 would replace the

[1] Station numbers are based on the Department designation numbering in metric units as shown in Figure I-1 in Appendix I of this document.

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Alternative 1

Alternative 2

For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area. Specific project design features are subject to change during the plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) phase for the project, and would take place in consultation with the Department District Landscape Architect, and the City of San Juan Capistrano.

FIGURE 2.1.6-7

Lower SR-74 Widening Project
Key View 1
Proposed Condition
12-ORA-74 PM 1.0/1.9
EA No. 086920

SOURCE: RBF

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sidewalk, this new sidewalk would not be meandering. In addition, Alternative 2 would include two additional retaining wall structures. Therefore, although Alternative 2 would replace the sidewalk on the north side of SR-74 between Calle Entradero and Hunt Club Drive, Alternative 2 increases the developed appearance of the site and would change the rural/suburban landscape to a more suburban landscape. Light and glare impacts would remain similar to existing conditions.

Implementation of the measures outlined below in Section 2.1.6.6, which require landscaping and aesthetic enhancements, would enhance the pedestrian and driver environment and reduce the appearance of hardscape. As shown in Section 2.1.6.6, the Department would replace in kind all landscaped trees that would be removed within this section; however, not all removed landscape (including removed trees) could be replanted in this section due to design constraints (refer to Mitigation Measure V-1, Section 2.1.6.6). Due to subjective human perception and due to the range in viewer awareness of moderate to moderately high visual impacts, the viewer awareness impacts are considered significant.

Key View 2

Implementation of project features in Key View 2 would result in a moderately high change to character/quality and a moderately high viewer response to that change for both Alternatives 1 and 2. Changes would include an increase in hardscape features (three retaining walls, curb and gutter, and the widened roadway) as well as removal of roadside vegetation adjacent to residents (see Figure 2.1.6-8). The proposed retaining walls would increase the dominance of hardscape features and increased light reflectivity from the additional concrete. Light and glare impacts would remain similar to existing conditions.

Implementation of the measures outlined in Section 2.1.6, which require landscaping and aesthetic enhancements, would reduce the appearance of the hardscape features. The visible change in character/quality at Key View 2 would be reduced with implementation of these measures, and Alternatives 1 and 2 would result in moderate visual impacts that are considered less than significant.

Key View 3

Implementation of project features in Key View 3 would result in a moderately low change to character/quality and a moderately high viewer response to that change. Changes would include an increase in hardscape features (curb and

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Alternatives 1 and 2

For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area. Specific project design features are subject to change during the plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) phase for the project, and would take place in consultation with the Department District Landscape Architect, and the City of San Juan Capistrano.

FIGURE 2.1.6-8

Lower SR-74 Widening Project
Key View 2
Proposed Condition
12-ORA-74 PM 1.0/1.9
EA No. 086920

SOURCE: RBF

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gutter, one retaining wall, one noise barrier, and a widened roadway) as well as removal of roadside vegetation (see Figure 2.1.6-9). The severity of the visible hardscape impacts from the noise barrier would vary depending on what architectural treatments are implemented. The visible encroachment would be greater with the decorative Sound Fighter® wall (moderately high) rather than the Plexiglas noise barrier (moderate). With implementation of the measures described in Section 2.1.6.6, which require landscaping and aesthetic enhancements, visible impacts from opaque wall structures would be reduced. Light and glare impacts would remain similar to existing conditions. Although the viewer awareness of these impacts would be moderately high and significant, the proposed planting and aesthetic treatments would reduce the moderate visual impacts and maintain the rural character of the community. Therefore, the visible change in character/quality at Key View 3 would be reduced to moderately low levels and are considered less than significant with implementation of the measures described below.

Key View 4

Implementation of project features in Key View 4 would result in a moderately high and significant change to character/quality and a moderate viewer response to that change. Changes would include an increase in the appearance of hardscape features (curb and gutter, one noise barrier, one retaining wall, and the widened roadway) and the removal of hillside vegetation (see Figure 2.1.6-10). The proposed noise barrier and retaining wall would increase the dominance of hardscape features and slightly increase light reflectivity from the additional concrete. However, light and glare impacts would remain similar to existing conditions. The severity of the visible hardscape impacts from the noise barrier would vary depending on what architectural treatments are implemented. The visible encroachment would be greater with the decorative Sound Fighter® wall (moderately high) rather than the Plexiglas noise barrier (moderate).

The measures described in Section 2.1.6.6 would reduce the developed appearance of the project; the moderate viewer awareness of these changes would result in moderately high and significant visual impacts because the rural landscape would change to a more suburban landscape. Therefore, the visible change in character/quality at Key View 4 would remain moderately high and significant after implementation of these measures.

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Alternatives 1 and 2 • Architectural Treatment A

Alternatives 1 and 2 • Architectural Treatment B

Direction of Photo Viewpoint Location
3 Viewpoint Number

Project Improvements
TCE (Chain Link Fence)
Drainage
Proposed Retaining Wall
Proposed Sound Wall
Proposed Right-of-Way
Existing Right-of-Way
City Boundary

For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area. Specific project design features are subject to change during the plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) phase for the project, and would take place in consultation with the Department District Landscape Architect, and the City of San Juan Capistrano.

FIGURE 2.1.6-9

Lower SR-74 Widening Project
Key View 3
Proposed Condition
12-ORA-74 PM 1.0/1.9
EA No. 086920

SOURCE: RBF

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Alternatives 1 and 2 • Architectural Treatment A

Alternatives 1 and 2 • Architectural Treatment B

For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area. Specific project design features are subject to change during the plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) phase for the project, and would take place in consultation with the Department District Landscape Architect, and the City of San Juan Capistrano.

FIGURE 2.1.6-10

Lower SR-74 Widening Project

Key View 4

Proposed Condition

12-ORA-74 PM 1.0/1.9

EA No. 086920

SOURCE: RBF

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Key View 5

Implementation of project features in Key View 5 would result in a moderately high change to character/quality and a moderate viewer response to that change. Changes would include increased hardscape features (curb and gutter, one retaining wall, new sidewalk, and the widened roadway) and the removal of mature vegetation to the south of SR-74 (see Figure 2.1.6-11). The proposed retaining wall and sidewalk would increase the dominance of hardscape features and would slightly increase light reflectivity from the additional concrete. However, light and glare impacts would remain similar to existing conditions. Implementation of the measures described below, which require landscaping and aesthetic treatments, would reduce the developed appearance of the Build Alternatives. However, the moderate viewer awareness of these changes would result in potentially significant visual impacts because the landscape would change from a rural landscape to a more suburban landscape. Therefore, the visible change in character/quality at Key View 5 would remain significant even after implementation of these measures.

2.1.6.6 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The following minimization measures listed below minimize the potential temporary or permanent visual effects that may result from the construction and operation of the project.

Erosion control seed species shall be determined by the Department District Landscape Architect to ensure that the mix and application strategy are appropriate for the specific soil composition of the area.

Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) is a process that allows for early collaboration of all stakeholders to develop solutions and gain consensus on design elements that are compatible with the context of a project area. For additional information on CSS, please refer to the Directors Policy No. 22 or the Department's Landscape Architecture context sensitive website: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/cs_solutions/index.htm.

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Direction of Photo
Viewpoint Location

5 Viewpoint Number

Project Improvements
TCE (Chain Link Fence)
Drainage
Proposed Retaining Wall
Proposed Sound Wall
Proposed Right-of-Way
Existing Right-of-Way
City Boundary

Alternatives 1 and 2

For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area. Specific project design features are subject to change during the plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) phase for the project, and would take place in consultation with the Department District Landscape Architect, and the City of San Juan Capistrano.

FIGURE 2.1.6-11

Lower SR-74 Widening Project
Key View 5
Proposed Condition
12-ORA-74 PM 1.0/1.9
EA No. 086920

SOURCE: RBF

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To maintain the context of the adjacent communities (color, form, and texture), the project shall install landscaping along proposed wall features and adjoining hillsides that is compatible with the existing landscaping. Landscape shall include trees (where feasible), shrub/groundcover mass planting, and vines on opaque noise barrier and/or retaining walls to soften the hardscape features and reduce the adverse environmental impacts (such as glare and radiant heat). All selected species within California Department) right-of-way shall share similar water requirements. The new landscape concept and plant palette shall be determined in consultation with the Department District Landscape Architect during the Project Design Phase.

All landscaping currently maintained by the City shall be replaced with similar landscaping. Trees that are removed shall be replaced consistent with the requirements set forth by Mitigation Measure V-1. Within the State ROW, where speeds are posted greater than 35 miles per hour (mph), large trees (trees with trunks over four inches in diameter when mature) shall be placed outside the clear recovery zone (30 ft from the travel lane). Small trees (trees with trunks four inches in diameter or less when mature) shall be used to replace the trees within the clear recovery zone. Tree spacing for small trees can be adjusted to account for the removal of existing mature trees.

There are limited locations within the immediate project area for planting large-growing trees, recovery zone setbacks provide areas for errant vehicles to regain control. The clear recovery zone policy from the Highway Design Manual is "strive for 40 feet or more of clearance between the edge of traveled way and large trees, but with a minimum clearance of 30 feet. Large trees may be planted within the 30-foot limit where they will not constitute a fixed object; for example, on cut slopes above a retaining wall or in areas behind guardrailing which has been placed for reasons other than the tree planting." There is not enough replacement planting area that meets the Department's minimum 30' clear recovery zone for large growing trees. Smaller trees can be planted to replace the trees removed for the widening project where there is sufficient space. Small trees are those with smaller trunks or plants usually considered shrubs, but trained in tree form which would not develop 4-inch diameter trunks within 10 years. The smaller trees can act as the foreground replacement planting for existing large trees. Examples of smaller trees that could be used to replace existing trees that would be removed are: Arbutus Unedo (Strawberry Tree), Heteromeles Arbutifolia (Toyon), Lagerstroemia Indica (Crape Myrtle), Metrosideros Excelus (New Zealand Christmas Tree), Myrica California (Pacific Wax Myrtle),

Photina Fraseri (Photina Tree), Prunus Caroliniana (Carolina Cherry Laurel), Rhus Lancea (African Sumac), Rhaphiolepis Species (Rhaphiolepis Tree)

All utilities that are to be moved shall be placed underground, where feasible. The Department will coordinate with the appropriate service provider and the City of San Juan Capistrano (City).

The following compensation and mitigation measures are proposed.

V-1 Trees, including coast live oak trees, that are removed as a result of the proposed project will be replaced by the California Department of Transportation (Department) at a minimum 2:1 ratio in accordance with Chapter 29 of the Project Development Procedures Manual for Replacement Highway Planting Policy or the Department's Landscape Architecture Program with General Highway Planting Policy, within the project limits or in suitable locations within the project area or the region. It is recommended that trees be replaced with native species.

V-2 In accordance with the Department's Policy on Context Sensitive Solutions and to maintain consistency with the existing infrastructure (i.e., walls, sidewalks) in the project area, architectural treatments for the structure elements of the project shall be determined in consultation with the Department District Landscape Architect and the City of San Juan Capistrano during the Plans, Specifications, and Estimate (PS&E) phase.

V-3 To minimize visual impacts caused by the extensive large-scale walls, wall aesthetic enhancements shall be developed as a theme treatment (i.e., color treatment, textural treatment, varying materials) for all new retaining walls and noise barriers within the proposed project. Structural themes (i.e., walls, sidewalk) shall be similar in character to the surrounding environment. Theme elements shall be determined in consultation with the Department District Landscape Architect and the City of San Juan Capistrano during the Plans, Specifications, and Estimates (PS&E) phase. The visual simulations included in this Visual Impact Assessment represent standard wall treatments only and are subject to change to reflect themes determined to be most appropriate after consultation with the City of San Juan Capistrano.

V-4 To minimize visual impacts caused by the replacement sidewalk, aesthetic enhancements shall be implemented (i.e., color treatment, textural treatment, varying setbacks from the highway, use of material other than concrete) for the replacement sidewalk, in accordance with V-3.

2.1.6.7 Level of Significance

The No Build Alternative would not result in temporary or permanent visual impacts.

Temporary visual impacts associated with the Build Alternatives would be less than significant. With implementation of the measures described above, permanent indirect and direct visual impacts of the Build Alternatives would be significant overall, irrespective of the differential findings for the various key views. Specifically the Visual Impact Analysis found that significant impacts would remain at Key Views 1, 4, and 5.